

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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### **Drawing Strength from the Courage of Others**

How thankful we should be for wonderful examples of courage that spur us on to greater strength in the Lord's service.

Paul was just such an example: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. 1:14). These brethren, formerly timid and reticent, were drawing strength from the courage of Paul.

Other examples abound. Stephen's plea, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' surely had for its source of strength the forgiving spirit of the Lord (Acts 7:60). The Thessalonian church found a source of strength in the example of the churches in Judea (1 Thess. 2:14). The Philippian church, a model of courage and conviction, could no doubt trace much of its strength back to the wonderful example of patience and equanimity demonstrated by Paul and Silas while in their midst. The Hebrew Christians were admonished to "remember them that had the rule over you, men

that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

Christians of this generation are similarly drawing strength from the courage of others. Young men who refuse to miss services of the church to play on a ball team; young women who refuse to be seen in public in scanty attire; businessmen who would lose their jobs rather than compromise their convictions; women who continue to adorn themselves in "meek and quiet spirits" whatever the sophisticated world thinks or says of them; sick people who bear their afflictions with patience and faith; elderly people who continue to attend worship when they are hardly able to go anywhere else; dying people who demonstrate how Christians ought to die; all are sources of strength and courage for others as they face similar circumstances. These all share a common spirit with the great characters of the Bible: they see in their temptations, trials, afflictions, and persecutions a special opportunity to be like Christ, to demonstrate their fidelity to Him, and to provide a source of strength for those who might be weak and wavering around them. They seize the opportunity and stand, and all of us are stronger because of them. Of these courageous people this world truly is not worthy.

Are we, however, to be always on the receiving end of the strength of others? As we draw strength from the courage of others, we must in turn become sources of strength and courage. Others look to us. Each of us has a "charge to keep," "God to glorify," and "a present age to serve."

- Bill Hall

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## Encourage Children To Be Spiritually Minded

“How can we encourage our youth to be spiritually-minded in this age of materialism and convenience?”

First, don't spoil them. Giving them everything they want, or nearly everything, or pushing things on them they haven't even asked for will create a materialistic mindset. Waiting on them hand and foot will make tyrants out of them.

Second, make them work. Teach them to do chores and generally help out around the house. Sometimes this means foregoing play time with friends. Make them get up and get going with the day (Prov. 26:14).

Third, and this is an overall point, children must have the truth instilled in their hearts from a very young age (Eph. 6:4). “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psa. 127:1). They need to be instructed in the pitfalls of materialism (1 Tim. 6:9, 10). Pointing to the wrecked lives of the “stars” in our culture will help to impress on them the emptiness of riches for the sake of riches.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, as parents we need to shun materialism and not shirk our duties in this age of convenience. Setting the right example for our children will put an indelible mark on their psyche that will stay with them the rest of their lives. If we are not doing right, we cannot expect them to do right.

We have an uphill task in raising our children. We must approach it humbly, with much prayer and patience. Others who have gone through it before can help us to avoid some of the bigger pitfalls and give wise counsel (Prov. 15:22). Let us have confidence we can do what the Lord requires of us and that our children will be good people.

- Steven Deaton

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## **Joint Efforts Result in Conversion**

Naaman was captain of the Syrian army, a war hero. He was also a leper. His story is told in 2 Kings 5.

In Naaman's day Syria made frequent border raids against Israel. During one of those raids a young maiden was taken captive who later became Naaman's wife's servant. She told her mistress about the prophet Elisha, whom she was sure could cure Naaman's leprosy.

Leprosy was among the most dreaded diseases in Bible times. It begins with brownish-red spots on the skin which turn into hardened nodules, and in time become ulcers. As the disease progresses the muscles and nerves are affected, resulting in deformity and paralysis. Naturally, one with leprosy would seize any opportunity to be healed. Naaman was no exception. Laden with extravagant gifts, he proceeded to Elisha's house, thinking the prophet would come out to him and ceremoniously cleanse

him. Instead Elisha sent a messenger to him, instructing him to go wash in the Jordan seven times.

Naaman reacted angrily. This procedure was illogical and humiliating. He might have returned home without complying had not his servants intervened. They wisely pointed out to him that he was prepared to do some great thing to be healed, so why not do something as simple as dipping himself in a river? Naaman reconsidered, obeyed, and his flesh was restored to a childlike purity.

This account illustrates several important lessons and is an oft-used sermon text. I want to make just one point from it: Naaman's cleansing resulted from the combined efforts of several people. The Israelite maiden initiated the process by telling him help was available through Elisha. Then Elisha, through a messenger, told Naaman what God required of him. Finally his own servants played the vital role of encouraging him to obey when he resisted. Each of these contributions was equally essential to Naaman's cleansing. Without any of them he would have gone to his grave a leper.

Those lost in sin need to be washed in Jesus' blood. Every effort at helping them is valuable; none should be demeaned. And there is something you can do. Some are like Elisha, who can effectively explain what God requires. Perhaps more of us are capable of this phase than we realize. But if you cannot be an Elisha you can be an Israelite maiden, telling others that cleansing is available and putting them in contact with an Elisha. Or maybe you are a good Naaman's servant, encouraging others

to do what they know is right. Barnabas was a "Son of Encouragement"; we need more like him. Some plant, others water. These efforts come together, and God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6).

Friend, every effort, whether large or small, counts. Your own conversion was likely the culmination of combined efforts of people who loved your soul. Now do what you can, unto God's glory.

- Frank Himmel

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Our Enemy is Ruthless!"* (Text: Rev. 12:12); Sunday evening: *"Are You a Good Soldier?"* (Text: 2 Tim. 2:1-4).

**GOSPEL MEETING 2015:** Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 19-24, 2015 with Jerry Crolus of Conway, AR preaching. Please mark your calendar.